DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 200 242 IR 009 283

AUTHOR Martin, Barbara; Smith, Earl P.
TITLE Materials Processing: Centralized Versus the Individual School, A Continuing Controversy.
INSTITUTION Auburn Univ., Ala. School of Education.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 19p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Centralization; Comparative Analysis; *Cost Effectiveness; Feasibility Studies; *Learning Resources Centers; *Library Materials; *Library Technical Processes; *School Libraries; Secondary Education; Surveys; Tables (Data)

ABSTRACT

A two-part survey was conducted in a large school district to determine the kind and extent of centralized versus individual school materials processing. Processing included both the cataloging and the physical preparation of materials, which would be done either at the centralized school district facility or by the staff in the individual secondary school library. Issues to be investigated centered on short-range and long-range implications. Short-range implications focused on: (1) processing costs, (2) catalog card sources, (3) administrative personnel attitudes, (4) time lapse in receiving materials in the schools, and (5) the effects of centralized processing for the school librarians. Long-range implications looked at the cost effectiveness of central processing, the acceptability of a general classification scheme to individual libraries, and the effects of centralized processing on library service efficiency. A questionnaire based on these implications was developed and sent to 17 secondary school librarians, and an interview was conducted with the School Library Department Consultant. Results indicated that processing costs for individual schools in terms of professional/clerical time was much greater than for centralized processing, and that there was little or no delay in getting materials shelf-ready from the district service center. References are included. (Author/BK)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED200242

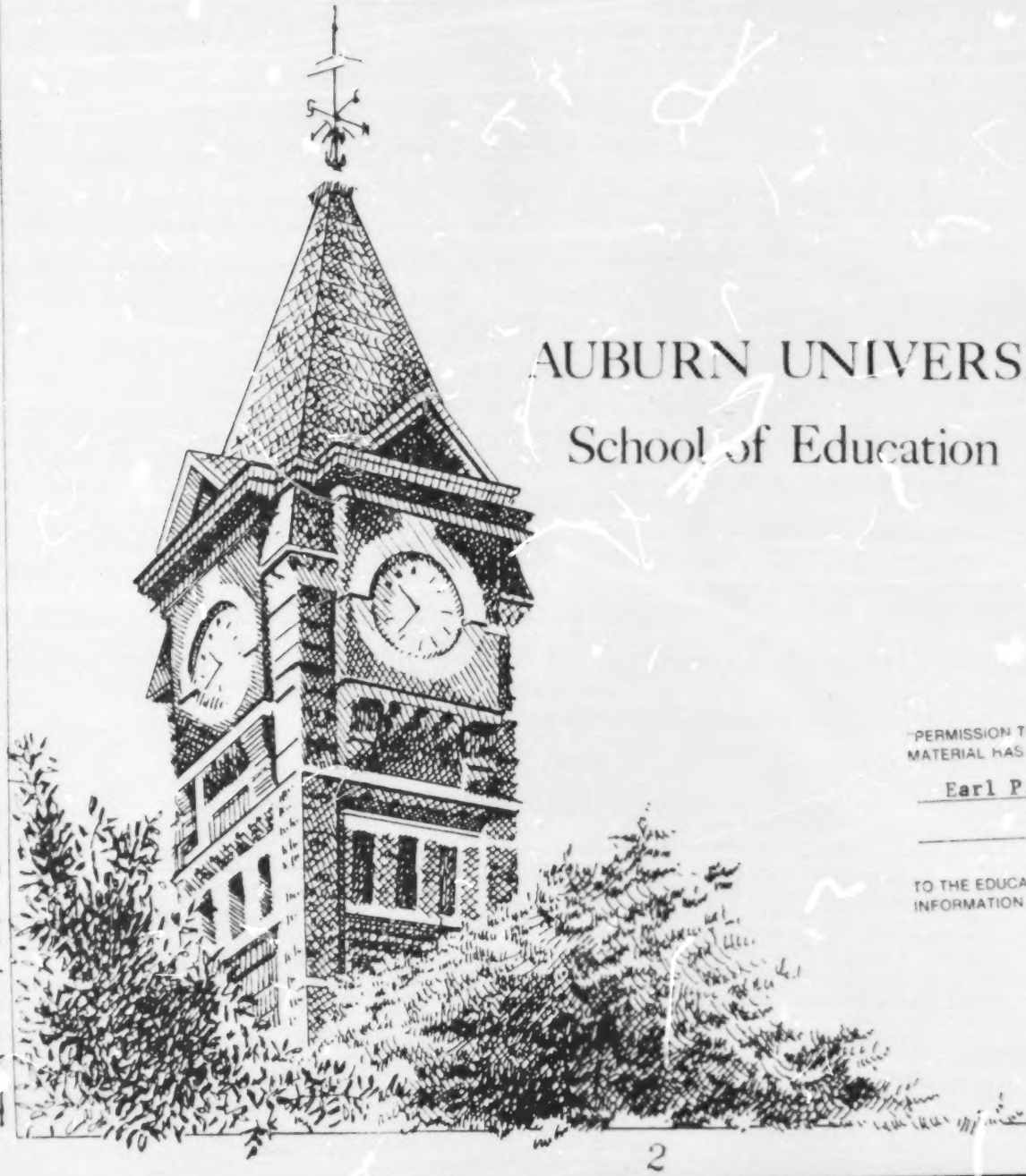
U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

MATERIALS PROCESSING: CENTRALIZED VERSUS THE INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL, A CONTINUING CONTROVERSY

Barbara Martin, Ed.S.
Columbus Public Schools

Earl P. Smith, Ph.D.
Auburn University



AUBURN UNIVERSITY
School of Education

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Earl P. Smith

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

IR009283

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ms. Barbara A. Martin is a library media specialist at the Kendrick High School in Muscogee County, Georgia. She received the master's and specialist degrees from the Department of Educational Media at Auburn University.

Dr. Earl P. Smith is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Media at Auburn University and is a former contributor to the Southeastern Librarian.

Address: Department of Educational Media
3058 Haley Center
Auburn University
Auburn, Alabama 36830

MATERIALS PROCESSING: CENTRALIZED VERSUS THE INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL, A CONTINUING CONTROVERSY

by Barbara Martin and Earl Smith

ABSTRACT

A two part survey was conducted in a large school district to determine the kind and extent of centralized versus individual school materials processing. On the basis of the responses, an analysis was made regarding the comparative costs of centralized processing and processing done in the single school, and any time delay between getting the materials shelf ready for each of the two levels of processing.

The results indicated that processing costs for the individual school in terms of professional/clerical time was much greater than that for centralized processing ($11.37 versus $1.80) and that there was little or no delay in getting the materials shelf ready from the district service center. Other recommendations were made regarding optimum use of staff time and improvement of library media services.

Materials Processing: Centralized Versus the Individual School, A Continuing Controversy

Barbara A. Martin and Earl P. Smith

Purpose

There is no question that processing of books and AV materials at the district level and in the individual schools is duplicative of time, effort, and money. But so far there are no data to document just how much time, effort, and money are being expended and no way to demonstrate the pervasiveness of this duplication.

The purpose of this study was to determine the feasibility of centralized district level processing for all secondary schools in a large school district in the attempt to avoid some of the duplication which was evident. An examination was conducted to compare existing centralized district level processing with secondary school library units processing to see where unncessary duplication might be occurring.

The study comprised the following steps: first, the literature was reviewed to obtain workable descriptions of different aspects of processing relative to advantages and problems. Second, a questionnaire was developed and data were collected from each of the secondary school librarians of a particular county school district. Information pertaining to the current status of centralized district processing was gathered from personal interviews with the district level school library consultant. Then a comparative analysis of the current status of processing at the district level and in the secondary school library units was performed. Based on the findings

of the study, recommendations for future alternatives dealing with processing of library materials at the district level are suggested.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Centralized Cataloging - Centralized cataloging includes only the classifying of books and other instructional materials and the supplying of full sets of catalog cards, done on a district level rather than the local library level.

Centralized Processing - Centralized processing is broader in scope and includes both the cataloging and the physical preparation of books, i.e., marking call numbers and putting cards and pockets on the book and AV materials.

Centralized processing rests on the principle that it is less expensive to do a job once for a number of libraries than they themselves could do separately. The centralized processing unit at the district level would normally serve all libraries in the district and have a coordinator in charge of all processing activities.

Commercial Cataloging - Commercial means "in commerce or trade" and implies the existence of a profit motive. A commercial cataloging service can be said to offer all or part of the cataloging operations of a library for a fee, and that the offer comes from a firm or individual in business for a profit.[1] As an indication of the number of firms, it might be noted that the Library Journal's "Annual Buyers' Guide" listed some 25 companies offering cataloging services for 1979.

Commercial Processing - Again, commercial processing is broader in scope than commercial cataloging. In addition to the complete set of catalog cards that is received with commercial cataloging, the books that are ordered

from a commercial library center will be completely processed. The spine label and book pocket will be affixed. A labeled book card will be in the pocket and the publishers dust jacket will be covered by a transparent polyester cover.

Comparative Aspects of Individual vs. Centralized Processing

It has been stated that the economic aspect is the "paramount motive" in a centralized technical service.[2] Is centralized processing less costly than individual library processing? And, if the cost of the centralized service is equal to or even slightly higher than that of the individual library, do the potential benefits of released time, greater discounts, increased space for other purposes, and a better level of cataloging offset the purely economic motive?

Logically, it seems that any combination of libraries into a centralized system should result in lower processing costs for each of them since centralization should eliminate repetition of both professional and clerical tasks. The efficient application of machine and mass production methods possible in such an operation should further speed manual jobs. It may also be theorized that the greater the degree of duplication of book titles realized, the lower would be the time/cost factor per unit cataloged.[3] The literature reveals several advantages to the concept of District Level Centralized Processing. These include:

1. Centralized acquisitions
2. Economy in eliminating duplication of professional and clerical tasks
3. Availability of needed bibliographic and professional tools
4. Assurance of having the work done expertly and uniformly
5. Advantageous buying of supplies in large lots

6. Saving time and labor by utilizing machinery, equipment, and staff at district level

7. Better development and training of personnel

8. Consistency in cataloging throughout libraries in district

9. Availability of information to consultants within school district through shelf list record

10. Freeing of librarian to do professional work, i.e., working with teachers and students

Problems Encountered When Implementing Centralized Processing

Certain problems in Centralized Processing must be taken into account when decisions are to be made. Before there can be an effectively administered processing center on the district level, there must be a spirit of cooperative venture on the part of the librarians involved. This statement leads into the first problem that may be encountered since in any cooperative plan, individuals make certain sacrifices for the good of the whole group.[4] The problems include:

1. Dealing with a disparate group of libraries and librarians and trying to satisfy each of them.

2. Imposing an intermediate step in the process which may or may not create a delay in receipt of library materials in the individual library

3. School district budgeting restraints in financing district level equipment, space, and staff

4. Administrative resistance to library innovation

Questions Raised When Dealing With the Concept of Centralization

The analysis of a technical service such as processing of library materials presents a unique set of questions which may have both short- and long-range implications for the results or performance of the technical process. It would be unwise to base wanted changes solely on personal preferences. If

changes are proposed in the technical aspects of processing, it would be feasible to know not only what effect these changes will have on efficiency of costs and productivity, but also what effect, if any, the changes will have on the quality of the services provided; that is, would time lapse be a factor or would librarians use their time gained from clerical duties for professional duties? And would the position of library clerk be in danger of being eliminated?

Short-range Implications

1. Would there be a significant change, either increase or reduction, in processing costs?
2. Which would be better -- ordering catalog cards from a jobber such as Josten's or district level card reproduction using a master set of cards?
3. Would the concept and practice of Centralized Processing be acceptable to administrative personnel as well as to professional library personnel?
4. Is there a time lapse in receiving materials in the schools?
5. Has Centralized Processing been able to give librarians released time in order to offer better services to students and teachers?

Long-range Implications

1. Is Centralized Processing preferable from the standpoint of speed, economy in time and money, and maintenance of good cataloging standards?
2. Would the loss of individuality in cataloging or the need for special modifications of the classification scheme be too great a sacrifice for individual libraries to make?
3. What effect on other activities and on services provided in terms of efficiency would be felt with an alteration in the processing activity?

METHODOLOGY

The next steps consistent with the procedures outlined were to develop a questionnaire and gather information from the secondary schools and describe the varied facets of district level processing. Because of the many questions raised in the literature, when one deals with the concept of District Level

Centralized Processing, it was decided to use the secondary school libraries in a particular county school district to analyze the situation, with reference to cataloging and processing, that existed in the individual schools. It was projected from the readings that secondary librarians spend a great deal of their time performing paraprofessional tasks, especially in the area of cataloging and processing books and audio-visual materials. Information related to time on these tasks was an important part of the questionnaire.

Based upon the previously stated short- and long-range implications and information gathered from readings, an eight-page questionnaire was developed and sent to the seventeen secondary school librarians in the target county school district. Despite its length, fourteen of the questionnaires were returned yielding a return rate of 82% of those queried.

Description of General Kinds of Information Sought from Interviews with School Library Department Consultant

The information gathered from the interview of the library consultant pertained to: a) staff, b) time lapse in processing, and c) quantity of materials process and is summarized in Tables 1-3

Tables 1, 2, 3 about here

Description of General Kinds of Information Sought from Questionnaire

The principal concern of the 30-item questionnaire was to obtain information centered around each individual library unit's amount of time and effort spent on cataloging and processing books and audio-visual materials. Second, it was to seek information dealing with types and numbers of faculty and staff, paraprofessional and student aid, and volunteer aid.

Other questions dealt with each library's collection and facilities, in the areas of quantity of books and audio-visual materials cataloged and percentage of catalog cards typed or purchased. The last concern was to

Table 1.

School Library Department Processing Staff

	(All are 12-month employees.)		Total per year
1.	Rank 3 Step 3	$460.00 per month	$5,520
2.	Rank 4 Step 5	490.00 "	5,880
3.	Rank 4 Step 3	432.00 "	5,184
4.	Rank 5 Step 3	415.00 "	4,980
5.	30% of Coordinator's time - 13 hours per week (30% of $21,253 = $6,375.90 per year)		
	Total salaries per year = $27,939.90		

Table 2.

Time Lapse for Materials Cataloged at School Library Department

Shortest - 3 weeks Average - 2 to 3 months

Longest - 6 months

For multiple copies of books, 4 or more, the time lapse is very short because cards are duplicated on Mini-Graph Duplicators.

Table 3.

Quantity of Materials

Number of books and audio-visual materials cataloged from September, 1977 - September, 1978.

15,716 books and audio-visual materials

Percentages of catalog cards purchased from jobber:	16%
duplicated by SLD:	35%
transferred:	49%

Average cost of processing per item: $1.80

gather reactions to tasks relative to what a basic library/media center program should be and to determine the degree to which library services and time spent on clerical work are adequate in order to meet the instructional needs of the school population, both student and teacher. This information is summarized in Tables 4-7. The questionnaire was developed for the purpose of determining the framework for future District Level Centralized Processing for secondary school libraries.

Respondents

The fourteen secondary schools of the county ranged in student population from 304 to 1800 and exhibited a median population of 1049. The teacher and administrative population ranged from 18 to 96, with a median of 57.

Findings from Secondary School Questionnaire

The findings from the questionnaires of the fourteen secondary schools included: a) personnel information, (Table 4); b) time spent on processing, (Table 5); c) materials and collection information, (Table 6); d) priority rankings of services and tasks, (Table 7).

- - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Tables 4, 5, 6 about here

- - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Summary of Frequency Distribution Table (Table 7)

Although each librarian rated Item "d", pertaining to sponsoring clubs, very low, four of them indicated that they sponsor a club other than a Library or Audio-visual Club.

Table 4.

Data on Staff

STAFF (10-month employees)	NUMBER OF LIBRARIES PARTICIPATING
PROFESSIONAL:	
Librarians	14
Assistant Librarians	6
PARAPROFESSIONAL:	
Clerk/Fulltime	9
Clerk/Parttime	1
TOTAL AMOUNT OF SALARIES PAID PER YEAR	$111,628
ADULT VOLUNTEER AID:	2
STUDENT ASSISTANTS:	14
OTHER EMPLOYEES: (in library)	10

Table 5.

Data on Time for Processing

Percentage of time spent on processing: (Average for all Libraries Reporting)	
Librarians:	35%
Assistant Librarians:	42%
Clerks:	36%
Time lapse: Ordering and receiving: (Based on number of Libraries Reporting)	
2 - 3 months	10
4 - 6 months	2
Over 6 months	2
Receiving and shelf-ready:	
Less than 2 weeks	7
Two weeks to 1 month	5
2 - 3 months	1
Over 6 months	1

Table 6.

Data on Materials Acquisition

Total number of books cataloged:	9100
Average: (per school)	713
Total number of Audio-Visual materials cataloged:	703
Average: (per school)	50
Total amount of catalog cards purchased:	
50% and below:	3
50% and above:	11
Total amount of catalog cards typed:	
50% and below:	12
75% and above:	2
Average cost of processing per item:	$11.37

- - - - - - - - -

Table 7 about here

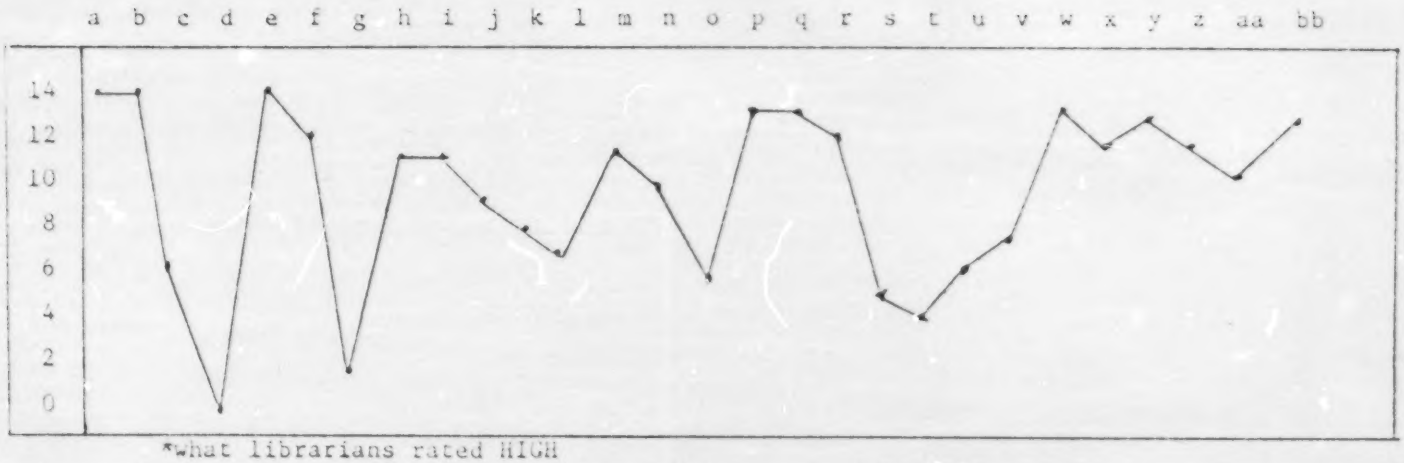
- - - - - - - - -

Item "o" deals with local media design and production. Most of the librarians rated this item "of some importance" or indicated that it was "not applicable" to their library/media center. Perhaps if librarians were freed from many of the clerical tasks involved in cataloging and processing, more time could be spent on media design which would be beneficial to students and teachers. Media production by students could be supervised by the library/media specialist.

Someone has to handle fines for overdue books and the updating of the vertical file, but this someone does not have to be a professional. Because Item "v" and Item "x" were rated high, one is lead to believe that library/media specialists feel that they must be the one to take care of these areas personally when, in fact, they should only supervise these activities for the most part.

A virtue frequently credited to centralized processing is the ability to free the librarian for other tasks which she feels are important to some extent. This survey shows a definite inverse relationship between the estimated time the librarian spends on processing tasks and their ratings on tasks that are definitely professional in nature and should be performed by librarians on a regular basis. The Table of Frequency Distribution on statements librarians rated HIGH illustrates the fact that librarians have a generalized concept of professional library services; however, the practice of professional tasks is not always congruent with the rating of these tasks. For example, the same librarians that rate professional tasks very high spent

Table 7.
Frequency Distribution*
N=14



*what librarians rated HIGH

The activities listed below form a basic library/media center program which is carried on by school librarians/media specialists. Please indicate the relative importance of the tasks in your library/media center by rating the tasks according to the given criteria in the space provided. If a task does not apply to your situation, please record "N/A" in the space provided.

1) Of utmost importance
2) Of considerable importance
3) Of some importance
4) Of little importance
5) Of no importance

_____a. Informing teachers systematically of new materials that have been acquired.
_____b. Assisting teachers in selecting print and audio-visual materials for classroom use.
_____c. Arranging bulletin boards
_____d. Sponsoring club and its activities
_____e. Teaching students how to use materials and equipment
_____f. Scheduling library classes for a period of library use
_____g. Rewriting materials to lower or higher reading level
_____h. Curriculum development
_____i. Responsibility for taking inventory
_____j. Designing duties and assigning tasks to Library Assistants
_____k. Designing duties and assigning tasks to Audio-Visual Assistants
_____l. Writing educational objectives
_____m. Acting as resource person to different subject areas
_____n. Public relations work
_____o. Local media design and production
_____p. Assisting students: Reference work
_____q. Assisting students: Library usage orientation
_____r. Assisting students: Reading guidance
_____s. Counting circulation
_____t. Stamping accession book and materials
_____u. Straightening shelves and general housekeeping
_____v. Handling overdue books and fines
_____w. Selecting and ordering books
_____x. Updating pamphlet (vertical) file
_____y. Assisting teachers in the development of reading lists
_____z. Providing educational and vocational experience for students through an organized student assistant program
_____aa. Planning and conducting in-service programs for faculty
_____bb. Assisting teachers in selecting audio-visual software and equipment

an average of 39% of their professional time on cataloging and processing, which involves many tasks that could be handled on a clerical basis.

Summary and Analysis of Findings of Questionnaire

Comparisons of the preceding items illustrate the trend that secondary school librarians spend a great deal of their time and effort on cataloging and processing. It illustrates the fact that most librarians have an average of 763 pieces of book and audio-visual materials "shelf-ready" in less than a month after receiving them, that they order 50% of the catalog cards that they need, and yet spend an average of 39% of professional time and 36% clerical time cataloging and processing these materials.

In terms of times indicated and median salaries, it was found that 35% of librarian's salary of $13,590, or $4,756.50, is spent on cataloging or processing. Forty-two percent of the assistant librarian's salary of $12,353, or $5,178.26, is spent on cataloging and processing. This means that an average of 39% of professional time and an average of $4,967.38 of professional salaries per year are spent on the task of cataloging and processing books and audio-visual materials. Thirty-six percent of clerical time and $1,512.00 of clerical salary each year are spent on these same tasks. In a year's time, the average amount of professional salaries of fourteen librarians for processing time would be $66,591.00 and of six assistant librarians, $31,069.56. For 9 fulltime clerks, the salaries would be $13,608.00.

Analysis of Findings and Short-range Implications

The concept of centralization of a technical service such as processing of library materials presents a unique set of questions which may have both short- and long-range implications. At this point in the study, it is not

feasible to consider the long-range implications; however, the following conclusions may be drawn concerning the short-range implications:

1. From the findings, it appears that processing costs in the individual school library far exceed processing costs at the district level processing center.

2. Librarians of eleven of the secondary schools report that more than fifty percent of their catalog cards are purchased from commercial suppliers. It is quite evident that these cards could be duplicated at considerable savings by the School Library Department. The machinery to do this is currently available for use in this particular center.

3. All librarians reported that they would favor district level centralized processing for secondary schools.

4. It appears there is currently no difference in time lapse for processing between each of the schools and the School Library Department.

5. From the information reported, the secondary school librarians estimate that about thirty-nine percent of their time is currently spent on materials processing. It seems apparent that many would find other ways to use this time profitably if the services were performed by the district level School Library Department.

These are many reasons why these implications and conclusions may not be acted upon but evidence is mounting that the days of local in-school processing are about over and thank goodness.

References

1. Theodore C. Hines, "Commercial Cataloging Services," Library Trends, 24, (April 1976), 783.

2. Donald D. Hendricks, "Comparative Costs of Book Processing in a Processing Center and in Five Individual Libraries," Research Series, 8 (1966), 3 (Un. of Illinois).

3. Hendricks, op. cit., p. 13.

4. Mary Hanley, "Centralized Processing, Recent Trends and Current Status: A Review and Synthesis of Literature," Occasional Papers, 71 (April, 1964), 9.

5. Because these are still many clerical tasks to be performed in a secondary school library unit, the position of library clerk should of necessity be continued.